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APOLOGY

FOR ACCEPTING

The Invitation to United Prayer

IN ALL LANDS:

GIVEN BY THE AMERICAN MISSION AT LODIANA.

BY

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AN APOLOGY, &c.

“AN INVITATION TO UNITED PRAYER, ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, THROUGHOUT THE WORLD: BEING AN EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 23RD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE LODIANA MISSION.”

When this delightful invitation to Prayer was received by me, my heart rejoiced “with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” for as the voice of God’s praying people was borne on the air from the shores of the hundred channelled Sutlej, to the inland lakes of America and Canada, I exulted in the thought and assurance that the time was drawing nigh, when in the words of prophecy, “The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, ‘Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of Hosts; I WILL GO ALSO;’ that the bright day was soon to dawn upon our world, when would be realized that from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent.”

But while this invitation to United Prayer, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the world, was meeting a ready response in the hearts of thousands of Christians of various denominations; and the great promises of the Gospel for the increase of the Kingdom of Christ in the latter days, kindled within my own heart a desire to unite my prayers, and the prayers of our dear people, with all who in every land, “love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,” I hesitated for the moment as to the most becoming and effectual mode of joining in the sublime concert of the saints in intercessory Prayer. “I besought the Lord to open my lips, that my mouth might show forth his praise.”

I asked myself—Whence does this invitation come? With whom is it

proposed that I and my people shall unite? Who are they that shall supplicate the "High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity," through the adorable name and merits of Jesus Christ, to pour out of the Holy Spirit upon the perishing millions of the heathen, and upon the whole world?

The invitation came from the American Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Lodiana, in the Punjaub, where the sword of the formidable Sikh had prepared the way for the Gospel of Christ; the invitation was repeated and urged by the London Mission in the Metropolis of Britain, where under the favoring auspices of a noble hearted Bishop, Prebendary Burgess exerted himself (with his usual alacrity in the cause of true religion), to make it known to the churches of Europe, and when the invitation reached us in Canada, it came to me and to my brethren in the Ministry recommended by the Secretary of the Colonial Church Society, —if not with the weight of Church or Episcopal authority—with the heartfelt sympathy and approval of many Bishops, and I believe of my own beloved Diocesan.

And to whom was this addressed:—

"THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THROUGHOUT THE WORLD." Does this mean the Church visible, or the Church invisible? Does it mean all the baptized of every communion over the whole face of the globe? or does it refer merely to the true and spiritual church of believers? As it includes an invitation to United Prayer, it must relate only or chiefly to those who are qualified by the Spirit of Adoption, to address God as their Father in Christ Jesus. "The Church of Christ" well described in a beautiful collect: "The elect of God knit together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Christ our Lord," and in that delightful prayer in our communion service: "Very members incorporate in the mystical body of the Son which is the blessed company of all faithful people."

The members of this church are they who, wherever found, have been baptized by one Spirit into one Body, even Christ; they are born of God and are made new creatures in Christ Jesus; they are justified by faith and accepted in the Beloved, and they grow up unto Him in all things who is the Head. This Church united unto its adorable Head and Saviour, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the one Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Mystical, Invisible and Invincible Church, in which we profess our belief in the creeds; "known only unto Him, who knoweth them that are His;" and this I believe to be the Church of Christ which is invited, and has the grace of supplication vouchsafed to her to plead in prayer the promises of the covenant for blessings of the Holy Spirit upon the world.

What interest does the visible church take, or is likely to take in such an union of prayer for power from on high? Interest! none. It is sadly manifest all around us. The external or visible church, comprising all who by Baptism profess themselves Christians, is a body animated (we speak from authority) in the proportion of at least nineteen twentieth's with the most deadly hatred to Christ and his true disciples! and will rather malign and avoid than join those who meet for prayer at the throne of grace. We deeply deplore the divisions, enmities and jealousies, which rend and injure the visible church, composed of so many names and parties; it is an evil which should affect us to tears, and we would, as one part of that visible church, enjoying as we believe, distinguished privileges, take home to ourselves the solemn warnings of St. Paul, which were issued to the Elders at Miletus, and to the Church at Rome and Corinth during his Apostolate; but as we must with grief confess that the Church of England was faithless to her divine Head in a considerable portion of her history, inducing, if not compelling, many worthy sons to forsake her communion; and as we know by long experience that *uniformity in the visible body* is utterly impracticable, and incompatible with the legitimate exercise of the rights of conscience, and "with the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," it becomes us who know what the truth of the Gospel is, to "endeavour to keep the *unity of the Spirit* in the bond of peace;" to seek that we may heal the breaches in Zion, not by authoritative ex-communications against the contumacious—by the enforcement of canons, or even by a rigid adherence to rubrics and acts of uniformity, but in the spirit and terms of the Prayer for all conditions of men, "that all who profess and call themselves Christians, may by thy good spirit, be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life."

We are not concerned to justify the admission of every class of Heretic into the visible church, though we believe that even the Church of Rome admits that Heretics, if baptised, are amenable to Church authority, and therefore within her pale. "How comprehensive then must be the Christian enclosure, and at the same time how discordant its parts, and yet this has been styled *Holy and Catholic*!!! We are perfectly satisfied with the doctrine of our XIX. article, on the marks and notes of the visible church, which coincides with the teaching of the confessions of all the Protestant Churches of Europe, the Augsburg, the Helvetian, the Belgian and several others. I am equally satisfied to rest the whole weight of the argument in favor of the view given above of the true and spiritual church—the mystical Body of Christ, "the Bride, the Lamb's" "wife," upon the testimony of those great lights of the reformation, Ridley, Jewell, Whitgift and Usher—Archbishops and Bishops in those stormy

and troublous times, when the foundations of the Angliean Church were being laid anew. With their profound and truly Catholic testimony, we are entitled to regard all those denominations as branches of the orthodox church, true visible churches of Christ, where the pure word of God is preached, the Sacraments are administered, and where there is some ecclesiastical discipline and government.

I shall confirm this with the declaration of one from among several of the earliest Archbishops of the resuscitated English Church. In the testimony of Whitgift, the fourth Archbishop from Cranmer, we have the judgment of the Heads of the Church of England at the very period of the final settlement of the thirty-nine articles. "It is plain," says Whitgift, "that any one certain form or kind of external government, perpetually to be observed, is nowhere in Scripture prescribed to the church;" and Whitgift's great disciple, the judicious Hooker, says in his Ecclesiastical Polity in a fine train of reasoning that "Christ never intended to set down particular and positive laws for his Church." Hence we are not surprised that Archbishop Usher, the most profound perhaps of all the divines who have governed the Church of God in the British Isles, gave a judgment which ought to be deeply pondered. "I have ever declared my opinion to be 'that *Episcopus et Presbyter, gradu tantum differunt, non ordine*;' Bishop and Presbyter differ only in degree, not in order, and consequently that in places where Bishops cannot be had, the ordination by Presbyter standeth valid. And howsoever I must needs think that the churches which have no Bishops are thereby become very defective in their government—yet for testifying my communion with their churches, which *I do honour and love as true members of the Church universal*, I do profess that with like affection I should receive the blessed sacrament at the hands of the Dutch ministers, if I were in Holland, as I should do at the hands of the French ministers at Charenton." The only other name worthy to be mentioned after the Irish Primate, is Lord Bacon: "I do confess that in revolving the Scriptures I could never find any such thing, but that God hath left the like liberty to the church government as he hath done to the civil government; to be varied according to time, place and accidents, which nevertheless his high and divine providence doth order and dispose. So likewise in church matters the substance of doctrine is immutable; and so are the general rules of government; but for rules and ceremonies, and for the particular hierarchies, policies and discipline of churches, they be left at large; and therefore, it is good we return to the *ancient bounds of unity in the Church of God, which was one faith, one baptism; and not one hierarchy, one discipline.*" Arch-Bishop Sancroft entirely approved of this singularly wise and scriptural judgment of Bacon, when he directed his clergy to exhort their

people to "*join in daily fervent prayer to the God of Peace for the universal blessed union of all reformed churches both at home and abroad, against our common enemies.*"

Sustained by this unequalled testimony in relation to the constitution of the Christian Church, as a visible body, we cannot go far wrong in recognizing the claims of some societies of Christian people, whose ministry, government, and mode of worship, differ from the Episcopal. When, therefore, we of the Church of England are invited by the Presbyterian Church of the American Mission of Lodianna, to *unite in prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in all lands*, we feel assured that had Whitgift, Sanckroft, Usher and Hall been living in this day of high spiritual expectation and promise, they would have responded to the evangelical call, and united in supplication and intercession with all who hold the Gospel in its purity—receive the sacraments—exercise charity, and have some form of government.

Heartily, therefore, do I respond to the invitation given by the *sister church in Lodianna*, Catholic as that invitation is in its spirit and object, to approach the mercy-seat, with the Holy Church throughout the world, in the prevailing *Name of Jesus*, that the spirit of grace and supplication may be poured out upon the professing church, and that the "way of God" may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations."

The object of this Invitation is strictly Evangelical and Catholic, and must commend itself to every believer's heart, and it is difficult to comprehend how any reasonable objection (with the Scriptures in view) could be urged against any Christian's compliance with it, and how any Church system, whose paramount duty and privilege it is to advance by prayer and effort the Redeemer's Kingdom, should offer any obstacle, or require any compromise of principle or position, or expose its attached members to offer violence to their conscience by uniting with other Christians and other Churches in supplicating the God of the nations of the earth, to pour out of his spirit upon all flesh, and hasten his Kingdom—"Thy Kingdom come."

But reasons are urged, and iterated with all the confidence and zeal which can only be made to comport with the system of Romanism, which denounces every effort and union of Churches outside the pale of the Catholic Church, as heretical, schismatical, and satanic. We vain hope, however, that none who are not of Rome, mean so much, though their views of the Church involve it.

But we calmly institute the enquiry,—What objections are there which should prevent me as a Minister of the Church of England, and my people also, from uniting with Ministers and Members of other denominations, (Churches in the profound judgment of Usher and Bacon, and

the Reformers of the English Church) in imploring together a second Pentecostal blessing upon the Church and world ?

Does not my conscience whisper to me (in this my liberty) that I dare not unite with Christians outside the pale of the Church of England, in prayer for any purpose ? else I become open to the charge of schism ! and I may not use any other book in Prayer, but the Common Prayer—or Prayer of any kind in public, or in the smallest company, except that prescribed form ; under pain of *excommunication* or suspension from office. Are the vows taken at my ordination so express and binding on these points that I must violate conscience, when I venture to pray (in any manner or in any place) except in my closet, without the Prayer Book !

I might easily dispose of this knotty question, by referring to the judgment avowed or tacit of our Bishops now governing the Church in various parts of the world,—and to the usage of the Church in relaxing the stringency of the Canons which relate to these points. But it is of more importance just at present, when Christian minds are jealous of spiritual rights and privileges, to deal with this question and untie this knot now cast defiantly at our feet, and if we fail to do so, to take the sword of the Spirit, with the holy jealousy of a Paul—and sever it in two, exclaiming, “ *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty.* ”

We shall see whether Ministers of the Church subscribing the Canons, may not pray sometimes where two or three are met together, or “ many “ be gathered together praying in the house of a Mary ” for a blessing upon a Minister, or upon the Church, without the Book, and offer no violence to conscience.

I am ashamed that it should be needful in this age of Gospel light, liberty and love ; in this era of Missions and Bibles in every tongue, and of united, unceasing Prayer, circling the globe, for the advancement, and hastening triumph of the Kingdom of Immanuel ; I say I am ashamed and grieved at heart, that it should be necessary to offer this *defence*, and show that a Minister of a pure branch of the Church of Christ, “ may be allowed ” to meet a few of his people who delight in spiritual fellowship with their Father and his Son Jesus Christ—with special prayer and intercession—“ and without infringing a Canon of his Church, and exposing himself to suspension or Episcopal censure.”

And this will we do by God’s help, and may the Lord the Spirit open the eyes of those who “ *observe* ” Canons and *Ordinances*, for Paul *was* afraid of such in his day ; and “ *who come in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus* ;—that they may be soon brought “ into that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, “ never more to “ be entangled with the yoke of bondage.”

The Canons or laws of the Church as an ecclesiastical body are numerous, but with few exceptions they may be considered as obsolete and inapplicable. The only Canon which may be considered as now really binding upon the conscience of a Minister of the Church of England is the XXXVI—subscribed *ex-animo* previous to ordination; and the clause which claims our examination here is the following:—"The Book of Common Prayer and of ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, containeth in it nothing contrary to the Word of God, and it may lawfully be used; and that he himself will use the form in the said Book prescribed, in Public Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and none other."

This Canon has all the authority that the Church can give it, and what is its obvious meaning and intent? That all Ministers of the Church of England should in the Public, stated, accustomed services of religion, use the Book of Common Prayer, and no other form; a rule of great importance, of high Conservative benefit, at the time when the Canons were put forth, and when there was a strong disposition in Ministers to depart from that order, and substitute a Directory or something different. And the Canon properly interpreted, and used as designed, is Conservative and important still; for who that is a conscientious, consistent minister of the Church, questions either her authority or her wisdom in requiring the use of this form on all public occasions; very few, I apprehend, among the thousands of her Clergy, however they may differ on other points, infringe the letter, much less the spirit of this wholesome Canon; I speak for myself, as an attached, though unworthy son of the Church of England, and a great admirer of her Liturgy and Articles, that for twenty-seven years, I have been spared and privileged to offer up with the great congregation the Morning and Evening Sacrifice of Prayer and Praise; on Sundays, Holidays, and many other days—without addition, omission, alteration or reserve. By God's help I have done so, unto this day; and by his Grace in Christ Jesus, I hope and desire to do so, until my adorable Master shall call me hence.

But does this Canon, (in the judgment of candor and of the spiritually taught mind) enjoin the use of the Common Prayer, every morning and evening throughout the year, and on every occasion when the Members of the Church are invited for prayer. It does not enjoin it, and although the preface to the Prayer Book expects every Minister to use these services daily, and to invite his people to do so (by the tolling of a Bell,) the Canon simply enjoins that this form and no other be used when public worship is performed; leaving it to the judgment of the officiating Minister to hold service as often (in addition to the accustomed worship of the

Lord's day) as he may deem beneficial, or as he may be able to secure a sufficient attendance of his people, to make it a *Public Service*.

But further, does this Canon touch the question, the vitally interesting question, of Prayer on those many occasions which will arise in a Church or among Churches, who delight in spiritual fellowship, and like the precious saints of old time "spake often one to another of the things of God—and were filled with each other's company."

In Christian candour does this rule interfere in spirit or letter with the devotions of the family, the social meeting, the special gathering of the Saints, or the confidential intercourse of the soul alone with its God; it would indeed be a perversion of the intent of this Canon, to force its application to such cases. The Book is a Book of Common Prayer—"Prayer for all people." The Canon, and the Church speaking through the Canon, is wisely silent as to those other occasions; she as the great upholder of the right of private judgment, and of liberty of conscience, has left her children free to approach their Father in Heaven, with or without the form in the spiritual exercises of the family,—in those of the select society where a few meet for Divine fellowship; in seasons of special prayer,—and in private unrestrained outpouring of the soul unto God.

I say the Church is wisely silent in reference to these occasions and exercises; for these are not *common*—they are not *public*—they are not adapted to, or regarded by the masses of the Baptized; they are *special*—*peculiar*—domestic, and admit of great diversity in spiritual exercise and application; and I am sure that the Church of England, whatever her faults, has imbibed too much of the Spirit of her Lord, which is Liberty and Love, to presume to infringe the sacred, inviolable prerogatives of the soul, of any of her children whose "life is hid with Christ in God—whose citizenship is in Heaven," by the most judiciously-framed Canons and Rubrics.

We might safely leave the matter here, for the knot is sufficiently untied, and we "trust that in this we have a good conscience."

But in what manner do our venerated Bishops deal with the Canon; for upon their judgment and action, as our Ordinary, we must rest. How often do they find it necessary to depart from and modify the Canon in question, when they institute special services with additional prayers or different psalms and lessons from those prescribed. In seasons of war, and pestilence and famine; when the heavens are as brass, and the God of all the earth is administering correction, and the Ministers of God's heritage invite to fasting, humiliation and prayer; the ordinary service is felt inadequate to the exigency, and the Canon must be relaxed, that the Father of mercies may be specially entreated; and when the affliction is followed by renewed mercy, appropriate Thanksgiving be offered up. And the

exercise of this prerogative of our Overseers is of vital moment to the spiritual health and revival of the Church.

But what shall we say or infer from the recent decision of the Church, in expunging from the Prayer Book three services because no longer necessary? The simple inference is that the Church is adapting and ought to adapt herself to the times and the dispensations of Providence; and the Canons of two centuries back, are an insufficient rule for her at the present. The demands for relaxation of any positive Canon are yearly more evident and urgent; it is difficult to divine what the spiritual requirements of the masses of people hitherto regardless of a heart-religion may induce our Bishops and Clergy, and the Church herself, to do. We know that the time is not distant when the lines or barriers which confine each section of the visible Church (holding the Head) within its own pale, will be obliterated, by the adoption of the pure element of Christianity—Love;—when Canons and Rubrics will cease. This time is hastening; and we are not surprised that some of the more distinguished watchmen on the walls of Zion, deservy the approaching gleams of the morning light, and are aiding to bring in the day of Christian unity and love.

Foremost in the van of these Watchmen, is the Bishop of London, in the land of our Mother Church; placed by the great Bishop of Souls, to guard the vital heart of Christendom, whose every pulse vibrates to the utmost limits of pure Catholicism, he has given no equivocal evidence of the mode and spirit in which he desires that the system of the Church of England should be made to work, and adapt herself to the spiritual, and moral, and even temporal necessities of the millions dependent upon her.

The Exeter Hall Services to the working classes, conducted by some of the most eloquent dignitaries and Clergy of the Church, have enjoyed all the influence and sympathy of this noble-hearted Prelate; and this is but one of the many plans and efforts which have been put forth, under the enlightened and liberal policy of this true Watchman of Zion's interests. to adapt the system of the Church of England, now moving more freely, to the exigencies of a large and thirsty population.

Time would fail me, were I to advert even cursorily, to the various agencies now at work within the limits of the City of London, and requiring the Bishop's approval and surveillance, such as the City Mission, numbering several hundred Missionaries, Scripture Readers' Association Ragged School Union, Open Air Mission, Lady District Visitors, and now the Female Domestic Mission. Were we to know a hundredth part of what comes before the Bishop as to the means and agencies employed to effect their objects, I fear that some of our more zealous champions of Canons and Rubrics would be sadly discomposed and shocked; and be tempted to do what some two hundred leading men have done—throw

themselves despairingly into the arms of Rome, there to repose their souls in a VISIBLE UNITY!!!

We rejoice, however, that the Church of England is now being made under the able rule of an Evangelical Bishop, really the Church of the Poor and of the Masses. We rejoice that the Gospel Trumpet in the hands of this Watchman, sounds along the walls of Zion with no uncertain sound, and we feel assured that the time has come, when we may carry the battle to the gate, and go forth (strong in the Lord) to the world lying in wickedness, and snatch the brands from the burning, and save souls alive.

We have stood too long on the defensive, perhaps we should say, too long satisfied with a mere negative religion, which maintains no vital truth with effect. Yet the war is going on; the call is now at length given to awake; and it is powerfully seconded by the conduct of the brave Prelate, who preached in an Omnibus Yard, within the precincts of the great metropolis, and must have for once relaxed somewhat of the ceremonial of our stately Liturgy. The movement is now steadily onward; Rectors and Vicars have gone forth to the highways and byways, not studious of Rubric or Stole, that they might proclaim among the City Heathen, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Rectors and Vicars have associated with Ministers of other Churches, and been aided by Laymen in Union Prayer Meetings, not in a few instances, but in many, that they might raise up by the Spirit of the Lord, a more formidable standard against the enemy. Rectors and Vicars are now engaging Theatres and Saloons, hitherto the resort of the ungodly, as centres for devotional exercises.

And the last phase of this remarkable relaxing of Canon and Ceremonial within the limits of that Diocese, whose every movement is an instructive and weighty lesson to the Christian world; some forty Clergymen (among whom I find the successor in the Parish of St. Giles, of Bickersteth, the present Bishop of Ripon,) have unitedly resolved that they will henceforward devote themselves by the Grace of God, to the great work of saving perishing souls. In view of all this, and of what is in prospect, we may well exclaim, "This cometh of the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel and "excellent in working."

We believe that the Rubicon is passed; the war with the world, sin and the Devil is now to be aggressive. We must all put on the armor of light, assured that the righteousness of Christ shall go before us, and the glory of the Lord shall be our rereward. Instead of waiting for our people to come to Church at the toll of Bell, and reading the daily, morning and evening service, because it is Canonical to do so, whether the number who attend be ten or a hundred, it becomes our duty as those who watch for souls, and are fully alive to their danger, (as well as to their present rebellion against God,) to follow the example and defer to the judgment of those

best qualified by high position, and full acquaintance with the devices of Satan, to know the wants and perils of the Church, and to adapt her system to her present exigency.

God Almighty grant, that our Church may realize in this her last great struggle, "That the Lord in her is mighty."

I cannot take leave of this interesting point;—the adaptation of the system or machinery of the Church of England to the changing state of society professedly Christian, without declaring, that we hold and shall uphold the Liturgy and the 39 Articles of our Church as a very noble monument of the Reformation, and we shall esteem it our duty and privilege to preserve and employ this Conservative bulwark of a Scriptural and Spiritual religion, as our defence under the good hand of our God; *second ever to the Inspired Scriptures, and ever to be tested by them*; our defence against Popery, fanaticism and infidelity. Having now said what would seem needful to justify a departure at times from the strict letter of the Canon, while we observe the spirit of it as Conservative of Order; and having shown, I trust, the importance of adhering to the Book of Common Prayer, on all the accustomed occasions of Public Worship,—we are now prepared to entertain another point in this vindication, which is called for by the *Invitation to Prayer* already referred to.

If we respond to, and accept this invitation to united prayer, we must be at liberty to pray, and to unite with other Christians, with Christians of other churches, in act or in spirit for the object proposed. We think that we have warrant for doing both. The authorities have been given, both for joining in prayer with Christians, who may differ from us in some things, while they perfectly agree with us in seeking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and for engaging in prayer not prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. If the dispensing authority be not deemed sufficient in either case by the more rigid Canonists, I fear we shall be obliged to class the objectors with those who teach for doctrines the commandments of men, and make the "Word of God of none effect by their traditions," who forget that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made us free,—so that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

But what can the churchman do without his Prayer Book? He has used it in the public services of religion all his life, and he has never tried scarcely presumed, to approach the mercy seat without it; he has been told, and in some instances taught from childhood, that no prayers will be heard but those of the Church, and he has even believed that the prayers which she puts up for him would be more available than *his own*, out a full and contrite heart. It is difficult to convince such persons that they may err, in ascribing so much validity to the Church's

prayers. What shall we then think of the Christian who while he values the form in the stated public worship of the sanctuary, ventures on some special occasions, in a meeting of friends, within the precincts of his loved home, with his Heavenly Father in secret, to make his requests known unto God in petitions drawn from the scriptures, in words and phrases of his own, based upon the promises of the Covenant in Christ;—pouring out the fervent emotions of his soul into the alone ear of his Saviour and God! Oh, can this be? Why can it not be? Does no child of God, being a churchman, enter into his chamber and hold fellowship there, like David or Daniel of old, at morning, at evening, and at noon day? I trow many an one! And is heard, in that he prayeth in the prevailing name of Jesus! And why may not any good churchman pray without even selecting collects, (excellent as they are, for the common wants of the church, but not so adapted to his peculiar wants at the time) without imagining that he undervalues the Prayer Book. Must he be considered as “thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think;” as puffed up with a fleshly mind, supposing he can make better prayers than those of the church because he has ventured to call upon his God, in petitions which the Holy Spirit has, by his gracious promise, prompted him to utter.

It is easy, and not uncommon, to speak of Ministers and Members of the Church of England, as guilty of self-seeking and of depreciating the Book of Prayer, by their using extemporaneous Prayer, for special objects. But it is not so easy to substantiate such a charge, by appeals to the word of God, which assuredly the rules of the Church will not contravene. We are sure that the discipline and the governors of the Church of England will be able to permit the exercise of such prayer, consonant as it is with the teaching and examples of Holy Writ, without seriously infringing the rules of the Common Prayer Book. And, moreover, it is very wrong to ascribe unworthy motives to those who urge, on strong scriptural grounds, the duty and benefit of special extemporaneous prayer.

We do not claim superior sanctity for those who urge this practice, and it is not pretended that the prayers they offer are superior to those in the Prayer Book; but we do claim for many of these, that they seek not “to exalt themselves but Jesus Christ the Lord;” and they hope and believe that by the accompanying influence of the Holy Spirit, their prayers may prevail to the building up of the spiritual walls of Zion—by the edifying of her sons and daughters in truth, holiness and love.

And in thus seeking the exercise of this privilege of holding social prayer, we ask: What is its peculiar nature and design, as distinguished from *Public Prayer*? What is to be attained in the way of spiri-

tual blessing by extemporaneous or free prayer, where a few of the more earnest and devout unite, which is not as well or better secured in public, and in the use of the prescribed form? It will be strange if the proper answer to this interesting and now important question, has not pressed with some force and scriptural obligation upon the minds of many who object to the practice.

A supposed disparagement of the "Common Prayer" is no adequate answer. A disposition to self-exaltation in exercising the gift of Prayer is not sufficient. A craving for more liberty in spiritual exercises, will not account for the practice. Men eminent for piety, sobermindedness and gravity in the school of the meek and lowly Jesus, have other and weightier reasons for assembling week after week for years, with the children of God's family, to supplicate blessings promised to his heritage, and to enjoy earnest of the heavenly inheritance.

Social prayer is desired and practised because it is *peculiar*, and not *common* in its objects; it is more suited to the *few* than to the *many*; it is based upon the supposition that those who meet are religious or desirous of becoming so, rather than that they are indifferent to *personal* religion, which is too manifestly so with the mixed congregation. But social prayer is chiefly desired, because it affords opportunity for adapting our petitions and confessions, with express reference to individual character and experience; because it enables those who lead in prayer, or in scriptural address and appeal, to give a personal direction (often of the most searching character) to what is said or prayed, which could not be done at any other time or place with like good effect.

In the social meeting, the utterances and experiences of the contrite or believing soul are brought out in terms which can only be hinted at, or implied in Common Prayer; and if this be an advantage to those dear inquirers, who need the guidance of an experienced teacher, as well as the "*Comforter*" who is ever present;—much more is the social prayer meeting desirable, and in a sense necessary to spiritual health and growth, when it is remembered that there we are privileged to pour out at the throne of grace—those supplications and intercessions with pleadings to the God of promise, for blessings which are not named—or scarcely noticeable in the Collects and Litanies of the church.

If it be alleged that in social prayer thus conducted, we undertake to supply a want which the church in her book of devotions has not supplied, or judged proper to give, and thus imply that there is a deficiency; we remark that the church could not have provided a better or more suitable service for the supply of the ordinary spiritual wants of her children, than they enjoy whenever they meet in the sanctuary. On this we shall insist as long as the church receives the Prayer Book as it is, and

we would venture in her vindication did she need it, to use the *very* argument urged by our Bishops in the Conference at Hampton Court with the Puritan divines, who objected to the language in the Liturgy, as too *general* and *indefinite*, which they deemed a *great fault*. The Bishops replied that it would have been a great fault, if it had been otherwise than general. Had the petitions, confessions, and thanksgivings been made more suited to individuals, the service would not be *Common Prayer*.

If then there be any deficiency or defect, on this point which was so warmly contested by our forefathers, it is not desirable to supply that by giving more of a special character to our Public Prayers; but an interesting and perhaps a vital question has of late years come up, as to whether the social prayer meeting may not answer a beneficial purpose, as auxiliary to the Common Prayer. We believe with many devoted sons of the Church of England, that social special prayer conducted either by appropriate forms, or, which is better, if done in humble and believing dependence upon the Holy Spirit (whose office it is graciously to help our infirmities, and teach us to pray) we believe that this kind of prayer is eminently suited to fill an important place in the spiritual edification of God's people, between private communion and the public worship of the great mixed assembly.

If this idea was self-originated, I should be backward to introduce it in the present vindication; but it is not so. I have no appeal to make to Christians outside our pale:—the subject has been one of deep and increasing interest for the last fifty years, and it deepens in its claims upon the lovers of Prayer every day, and in every part of the household of faith.

It is with satisfaction I am able to support the idea of a social prayer meeting, by the practice of two Clergymen, who were equally respected, admired and loved in their time and spheres of labour:—the Rev. Charles Simeon, of Cambridge, in the Church of England, and the Rev. Dr. Milnor, of St. George's, New York, the able predecessor of the justly celebrated Dr. Stephen Tyng, whose parochial labours and success are scarcely paralleled in any Church.

No Minister was more looked up to by Bishops and Clergy, or College Gownsmen, than Simeon. His unquestioned piety, his great talents, and acquirements—his remarkable self-sacrifice, and his great influence and success as an Evangelical Clergyman in that important sphere of duty gave weight to all that he did. One of the most striking features in his parochial system was the meeting for Social Prayer. I shall quote a passage from one of his own letters in reference to this: "I am aware," says he, "that such societies are by many accounted irregular, and that few of the Governors of the Church would sanction them; and it is a curious

fact that the establishing of these societies is generally supposed to indicate an indifference towards the Church when it actually proceeds from a love to the Church, and a zeal for her interests. Were the Bishops acquainted with the Ministers who are called Evangelical, they would soon see the importance, yea the absolute necessity of such meetings, not merely for the edification of the people, but chiefly for the preservation of the Established Church. Where nothing of the kind is established, the members of any Church are only as a rope of sand, and may easily be scattered with every wind of doctrine, or drawn aside by any proselyting sectary. As to the idea of such meetings being contrary to our obligations as Ministers of the Establishment, let any one read the Bishop's charge to the Priests in the Ordination Service, and say whether a Clergyman can fulfil his duties without them? I am well persuaded he cannot, and experience proves that wherever there is an efficient Ministry in the Church without somewhat of a similar superintendence, the Clergyman beats the bush, and the dissenters catch the game; whereas, where such a superintendence is maintained, the people are united as an army with banners." After an experience of thirty years, Mr. Simeon's opinion remained unchanged on this subject.

But if any objection should be urged against Simeon's practice, as few men could do successfully what he did;—the plan pursued by another Clergyman, a contemporary of his in the Episcopal Church, New York, will commend itself as answering every purpose desired by its projector, and one which may be followed by any minister of like sentiments, without being open to any real objection by the attached Churchman. Milnor's ministerial life was a contrast in one respect to that of Simeon. The stream of Milnor's life in his own parish was uniformly smooth: that of Simeon was troubled throughout, yet both were eminently successful. The Evangelical stand of Simeon at Cambridge, excited a continuous opposition during a great part of his Ministry. The Evangelical stand of Milnor, who stood at that day nearly alone, was much blessed to his own Parish of St. George, but the disapproval of his peculiar sentiments and practice, by nearly all his brethren, was most formidable. He instituted a Tuesday and a Friday Evening Lecture, in his Lecture Room, which was opened with *forms* from the Prayer Book, but closed with extemporaneous prayer; where with large audiences, scenes of deep and powerful interest through the evident presence of the Holy Spirit, occurred. I here quote from his instructive Biography: "Out of his parish, his course of labor lay through much opposition, and his day of action was often stormy. The extemporaneous close to his Lecture-room exercises, and the meetings which he countenanced among his communicants for social prayer without forms, encountered the constant and earnest

displeasure of leading men; while the public stand which he felt it his duty to take, in co-operating with Churches of other denominations in distributing the Bible without note or comment, and in circulating religious tracts of an unsectarian character, drew upon him reiterated expressions of disapprobation from a large portion of the Episcopal Church." These testimonies to the use and advantage of the social prayer meeting are sufficient to vindicate their adoption by those who desire to know the more religious of their people, and to keep them united in the bonds of spiritual and Church fellowship. Simeon and Milnor were men of high spiritual principles, and left their mark on the Church, and on the age in which they lived.

They have gone to their rest—Simeon in 1836, Milnor in 1845, "and their works do follow them;" and we must say of them both with emphasis that "Two great men have fallen in our Israel!!"

The storms which these accomplished standard bearers of Immanuel had to brave during the greater part, or the whole of their eventful course, are dispersing, and the sound evangelical principles for which they contended with so much success are now bearing their sway, not in parishes only, but in several Dioceses in England, Ireland and America. Six Bishops, if not more, occupy that high position in the American Church, (which though but Presbyter, Milnor held nearly alone) supported by a staff of Clergy, every one of whom acknowledges a high debt of gratitude to be due to the brave and consistent champion for a pure and full Gospel, in the Diocese of New York.

While speaking of the American Sister Church, I would remark that efforts have been made for some time to obtain from Convention a formal recognition of the Social Prayer Meeting, (as auxiliary to, but not to interfere with the system of the Church and of the Prayer Book,) but it has not been effected, and it is doubtful whether it will ever receive anything further than a tacit approval by the Bishop in whose Diocese such Prayer Meeting is deemed really beneficial.

It is not so much a Church, as a Parochial arrangement, and if it be conducted with sobriety of judgment, and with a single eye to the glory of God, and the spiritual edification of souls, it will hardly fail to receive the protection of those who love Evangelical truth and godliness, and Apostolical order.

In the conclusion of this defence, and in its application to the hearts and consciences of those who desire to see in the Church of England a conservator of vital Godliness, Gospel Truth and Love, Spiritual Liberty and Peace, I would invite earnest attention to two things of great importance at the present time.

The first relates to the Scriptural warrant for the Social Prayer Meeting; the second to the Scriptural bond of union between all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it must be confessed that when we look at the meeting of a few really devoted Christians, for devotional purposes; (apart from the particular rules of any local Church,) in the light of God's Holy Word alone, we are struck with wonder that those who belong to the family of heaven and earth, who feel themselves influenced by the Spirit of Adoption, and led by the promises of the Covenant of Grace, to meet for Spiritual fellowship; we wonder that they can live from week to week, and from year to year, without being brought together, by their love to Christ, to hold precious domestic fellowship in the things of God. Surely nothing but the absence of that spiritual thirst, so beautifully figured by David, "as the hart panting after the water brooks," can account for the indifference to these social gatherings of the Saints!—and for the objection to them as interfering with public devotion and rules of discipline. Glad are we that "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" are shedding a more holy influence over our Zion, and that the calls to prayer wafted from Northern India, from Burmah, and from other regions thirsting for the dews of Heaven, are responded to, and the Throne of Grace is simultaneously surrounded by thousands in every land, united in this one aspiration, "Our Father in Heaven hallowed be thy Name"—"Thy Kingdom Come." In this we shall rejoice. It seems as if the time had come that Zion should put on her beautiful garments, and her children were now to plead the great promises of her Lord that she should become a praise in the earth. Prayer social, personal, public; intercessory, importunate prayer, is now more than ever her duty and her privilege.

The perilous and responsible position of the Church demands increasing prayer; the Scriptures everywhere invite her to keep not silence; the Holy Spirit incites and helps her to supplicate her Lord; exceeding great and precious promises encourage her to plead with her Covenant God in Christ; the cry of perishing millions coming up from the dark places of the earth urges her to wrestle for the blessing of prevailing Jacob;—and the times plainly tell her "that the Bridegroom cometh—and her redemption draweth nigh."

Christians everywhere, and of every name, awake, arise, and unite in fervent prayer; Churchmen take your Prayer Book into the Sanctuary, and worship God in the beauty of holiness, with the Spirit and with the understanding also; pour out your hearts in deep contrition, and fall down on your knees before his footstool. Come with me now into the place where a few are met together praying—an Apostolic practice,—and let us implore in special prayer blessings promised to individuals, in whom

we have a special interest; let us supplicate the God of all Grace as we have never done before; let us pray for the peace and purity and prosperity of Jerusalem, the Zion of the whole earth; let us pray that all Churches may dwell together in love and harmony; that the divisions and jealousies of the Church may be healed; that the Gospel may have free course and be glorified; that the Ministers of Christ may be indued with power from on high; that the Holy Spirit may be abundantly poured out, that the form of godliness may give place to its power; that God's work may be revived in the midst of the days; that the Deliverer may come to Zion, and all Israel be restored to their land, and be saved; that Babylon the great may speedily fall; all flesh see the salvation of God, and the Reign of the Prince of Peace commence.

Come with me to the place where Prayer is wont to be made; and unite with us in special supplication for these, and for numerous other things, and if you cannot find, for I have been unable to find *suitable* and special prayers in the Prayer Book for these things, be candid enough to acknowledge that everything definitely promised in the Bible to God's heritage is not prayed for in that excellent Manual, and confess that you have asked too much of the Common Prayer Book; and with the inspired promises as your warrant and guide, feel that you may exercise the liberty and the privilege of asking your covenant Father to grant you abundantly more than you have ever yet asked in the name of his adorable son Jesus;—and doubt no more that special outpouring of your soul in "Prayer in the Spirit" is necessary—that the Church and every adopted child may enjoy spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Tell me not! utter it not, brother Churchman, in the hearing of any one who knows that the Church of Christ is the "Light of the world," that she holds the promises of her Lord, and is responsible to them if she fails to plead them at the Throne of the Great Intercessor; say not, that the Prayer Book contains everything in Promise and Prayer for her children.

It does not; no,—not one hundredth part of what is expressly promised, and is the subject of Prayer in the Bible, and especially to be urged in these days of conflict and high hope. Take your Bible into your closet, and after a week of close communion with heartfelt prayer to be taught of God, come forth and acknowledge that special prayer, extemporaneous, social prayer "in and by the Holy Spirit," is absolutely needful to the spiritual health, growth and usefulness, both of the Church, and of every one of her dear children,

Let this suffice upon the Scriptural reasons for Social Prayer. May the Lord by his Spirit put it into the hearts of all those who believe in Jesus

Christ for salvation, to meditate on the 20th and 21st verses of the iii. of Ephes. "*For he is faithful that promised!*"

And now in conclusion, we have reached in our application of the whole subject the point from which we began;—the Scriptural grounds for uniting in Prayer with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the world. We would offer this affectionate and faithful appeal:

Christians! Lovers of Christ! Heirs of Promise! influenced by the Spirit of Adoption to cry Abba Father! I appeal to you on behalf of your Covenant God, and for Christ the Son of the Father; for his Church, and for the world;—to seek by all instituted means, the Union of all "who name the name of Christ."

The ultimate and complete union of the people of God on earth is clearly foretold in the Scriptures of truth. It is the subject of prayer by our adorable Head; in the last prayer he offered during his humiliation, he prayed that all *who believed might be one*, and now that he is seated on his Father's throne, he urges in prayer the same great object. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, that we all may be one. The Holy Spirit is promised to be poured out from on high, in answer to the prayer of the Church, that all who believe may live in unity, peace and love; and remember that this blessed union will be realized visibly, completely, gloriously, when the Redeemer comes to Zion, and reigns on earth, Prince of Peace.

Christians and Churchmen weigh these things prayerfully. We ask no compromise of principle or position when we urge that all who believe in the Son of God would unite in truth and love, and as far as practicable in prayer; that they may thereby manifest the Redeemer's glory.

Long have Christians of various names united in sending the Bible, without note or comment, to every creature; for many years have they united in the circulation of religious tracts of an Evangelical character. More recently it has been thought advisable to attempt a further union of Churches in the Evangelical Alliance, and now in our own day seasons of remarkable awakening and revivals of religion have constrained christians of every denomination, who believe in Jesus, to unite in prayer, and in preaching the gospel, that the great salvation may be seen and experienced by perishing thousands. And lastly, while we write these words, a louder, more noble, and soul-stirring call reaches our ears from lands thousands of miles away, to *unite*, and plead, and wrestle with God in *Intercession*, that "the Holy Spirit may be poured out upon all Flesh," that the grand millennial promise may soon be realized. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heavens for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

Christians and Churchmen, we repeat, we ask you not to compromise

anything destinctive in your church position and relations, which you deem more valuable than union in spirit, in aspiration, in holy fellowship with those who are one with Christ by faith. May the Spirit lead you in the right and perfect way ; to your own Master you stand or fall. Remember the words of Paul, "*I shew unto you a more excellent way.*" CHARITY.

He that so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to die for us, *draws you* unto himself, with *cords of love*, that you may be one. He that died for you on Calvary is now manifestly drawing you unto his cross as the grand centre of Union, that you all may be one. That blessed Spirit, the Comforter, who descended with power and grace upon the infant church at Pentecost, and is now reviving with quickening influence parts of God's heritage, is drawing the hearts of praying Christians in many lands to one common object—the advent of a second Pentecost, when all "*flesh shall see the salvation of God.*" And surely our Divine Intercessor must regard the prayers and efforts of his believing people after union, with the deepest sympathy, and his intercession will be mingled with his merits, for this happy consummation.

Once again, and finally, Christians, lovers of holy union, and brotherly love, unite whenever you conscientiously can in praying for the purity, unity, and increase of the church of the saved. Pray that everything tending to injure its beauty, obstruct its usefulness, or perpetuate disunion among its professing members, may be removed. Pray that everything pertaining to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church of Christ, may be brought into the nearest accordance with the word of God ; church reforms, revisions of prayer book, disruptions, secessions, Church persecutions, acts of uniformity, acts of toleration, all have failed, miserably failed, to unite Christians. Let us now try the power of prayer, of united prayer, and God, even our Covenant God, may smile on the effort put forth in faith and truth and love, and give us his blessing. Oh let us unite without delay everywhere, in private, in social companies, in our families, and in public, and implore the Minister of the Upper Sanctuary, to sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, to purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us stir up our souls, and the souls of each other, to such holy earnestness that, like Jacob wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant, we shall refuse to let him go unless he bless us. Dear people of God, permit me, as one who loves Christ, and all who love him in sincerity, to urge you to unite in intercession for the abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and for the speedy coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring in his kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high in second Pentecostal rains ; the latter day glory ; the millennial reign of blessedness to

the church and the world, will not be realized. Therefore send up your purest, most earnest aspirations to the heavenly throne, that this double advent—*of the Comforter and of the Redeemer*—in glorious manifestation, may soon arrive.

The prayers of one hundred-and-twenty—the Church of Christ at Jerusalem—was answered by the Pentecostal first-fruits. Oh let the prayers of more than one hundred and twenty thousand—the Church of Christ throughout the world—ascend to our adorable Head and High Priest, and we may expect that a full Harvest blessing will be poured out upon the waiting and thirsting heritage of the Lord. Hasten, O Saviour, this promised blessing. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

P. S. I think it due to all members of our church, who may read this defence, to say, that I have great satisfaction in referring to the excellent charge of my Diocesan, delivered to his clergy at his Primary Visitation, for the views then given with equal clearness and Scriptural fulness, on the "*Nature of the Church of Christ: visible and invisible.*" Also on the authority, relative value, and use of the *Articles of the Church*, and of her *Formularies*, as we find them in the Book of Common Prayer. I commend all that the Bishop says on these two points, (The Authority of the 39 Articles, and the Value of the Liturgy and other Services for the use of the Church,) to the careful perusal of all our members. And I trust that what our beloved Diocesan says at the close of his charge, on the importance of cultivating *the Spirit of Prayer*, will serve to shew that, whatever variety of opinion there may be among true Christians as to the best mode of offering Prayer under all circumstances, all who enjoy the Spirit of Adoption will esteem it their duty and privilege to "pray always "with all prayer, and supplicating in the Spirit with all Saints," that God's way may be known upon earth, her saving health among all nations.

